

Lesson: Operational Direction Operations

Reference Document: JO 7110.65, Para 2-1-4, Operational Priority

Section 1. General

2-1-4. OPERATIONAL PRIORITY

Provide air traffic control service to aircraft on a “first come, first served” basis as circumstances permit, except the following:

NOTE—

It is solely the pilot’s prerogative to cancel an IFR flight plan. However, a pilot’s retention of an IFR flight plan does not afford priority over VFR aircraft. For example, this does not preclude the requirement for the pilot of an arriving IFR aircraft to adjust his/her flight path, as necessary, to enter a traffic pattern in sequence with arriving VFR aircraft.

a. An aircraft in distress has the right of way over all other air traffic.

REFERENCE—

14 CFR Section 91.113(c).

b. Provide priority to civilian air ambulance flights (call sign “MEDEVAC”). Use of the MEDEVAC call sign indicates that operational priority is requested. When verbally requested, provide priority to AIR EVAC, HOSP, and scheduled air carrier/air taxi flights. Assist the pilots of MEDEVAC, AIR EVAC, and HOSP aircraft to avoid areas of significant weather and turbulent conditions. When requested by a pilot, provide notifications to expedite ground handling of patients, vital organs, or urgently needed medical materials.

NOTE—

It is recognized that heavy traffic flow may affect the controller’s ability to provide priority handling. However, without compromising safety, good judgment must be used in each situation to facilitate the most expeditious movement of a MEDEVAC aircraft.

c. Provide maximum assistance to SAR aircraft performing a SAR mission.

REFERENCE—

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 10-1-3, Providing Assistance.

d. Expedite the movement of presidential aircraft and entourage and any rescue support aircraft as well as related control messages when traffic conditions and communications facilities permit.

NOTE—

As used herein the terms presidential aircraft and entourage include aircraft and entourage of the President, Vice President, or other public figures when designated by the White House.

REFERENCE—

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 2-4-20 Aircraft Identification.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 4-3-2 Departure Clearances.

FAAO JO 7210.3, Para 5-1-1 Advance Coordination.

e. Provide special handling, as required to expedite Flight Check aircraft.

NOTE—

It is recognized that unexpected wind conditions, weather, or heavy traffic flows may affect controller’s ability to provide priority or special handling at the specific time requested.

REFERENCE—

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 9-1-3, Flight Check Aircraft.

f. Expedite movement of NIGHT WATCH aircraft when NAOC (pronounced NA-YOCK) is indicated in the remarks

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section of the flight plan or in air/ground communications.

NOTE–

The term “NAOC” will not be a part of the call sign but may be used when the aircraft is airborne to indicate a request for special handling.

REFERENCE–

FAAO JO 7610.4, Para 12-1-1 Applications.

g. Provide expeditious handling for any civil or military aircraft using the code name “FLYNET.”

REFERENCE–

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 9-2-6 FLYNET.

FAAO JO 7610.4, Para 12-4-1 “FLYNET” Flights, Nuclear Emergency Teams.

h. Provide expeditious handling of aircraft using the code name “Garden Plot” only when CARF notifies you that such priority is authorized. Refer any questions regarding flight procedures to CARF for resolution.

NOTE–

Garden Plot flights require priority movement and are coordinated by the military with CARF. State authority will contact the Regional Administrator to arrange for priority of National Guard troop movements within a particular state.

i. Provide special handling for USAF aircraft engaged in aerial sampling missions using the code name “SAMP.”

REFERENCE–

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 9-2-17, SAMP.

FAAO JO 7210.3, Para 5-3-4, Atmosphere Sampling For Nuclear Contamination.

FAAO JO 7610.4, Para 12-4-3, Atmospheric Sampling For Nuclear Contamination.

j. Provide maximum assistance to expedite the movement of interceptor aircraft on active air defense missions until the unknown aircraft is identified.

k. Expedite movement of Special Air Mission aircraft when SCOOT is indicated in the remarks section of the flight plan or in air/ground communications.

NOTE–

The term “SCOOT” will not be part of the call sign but may be used when the aircraft is airborne to indicate a request for special handling.

REFERENCE–

FAAO JO 7610.4, Para 12-7-1, Applications.

l. When requested, provide priority handling to TEAL and NOAA mission aircraft.

NOTE–*Priority handling may be requested by the pilot, or via telephone from CARCAH or the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron (53WRS) operations center personnel, or in the remarks section of the flight plan.*

REFERENCE–

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 9-2-19, Weather Reconnaissance Flights.

m. IFR aircraft must have priority over SVFR aircraft.

REFERENCE–

FAAO JO 7110.65, Chapter 7, Section 5, Special VFR (SVFR).

n. Providing priority and special handling to expedite the movement of OPEN SKIES observation and demonstration flights.

NOTE–*An OPEN SKIES aircraft has priority over all “regular:” air traffic. “Regular” is defined as all aircraft traffic other than:*

1. Emergencies.

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2. Aircraft directly involved in presidential movement.

3. Forces or activities in actual combat.

4. MEDEVAC, and active SAR missions.

5. AIR EVAC and HOSP aircraft that have requested priority handling.

REFERENCE–

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 9–2–22, OPEN SKIES Treaty Aircraft.

FAAO JO 7210.3, Para 5–3–7, OPEN SKIES Treaty Aircraft.

Treaty on OPEN SKIES, Treaty Document, 102–37.

o. Aircraft operating under the North American Route Program (NRP) and in airspace identified in the High Altitude Redesign (HAR) program, are not subject to route limiting restrictions (e.g., published preferred IFR routes, letter of agreement requirements, standard operating procedures).

REFERENCE–

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 2–3–2, En Route Data Entries.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 2–2–15, North American Route Program (NRP) Information.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 4–2–5, Route or Altitude Amendments.

FAAO JO 7210.3, Chapter 17, Section 16, North American Route Program.

p. If able, provide priority handling to diverted flights. Priority handling may be requested via use of “DVRSN” in the remarks section of the flight plan or by the flight being placed on the Diversion Recovery Tool (DRT).

REFERENCE–

FAAO JO 7210.3, Para 17–4–5, Diversion Recovery